

8 Deep Adjustments To Your Listings

👤 Matt Landau · ⌚ Today at 10:28 AM · 🏠 airbnb | 🏡 homeaway | 📄 listing sites | 🏖️ vacation rental marketing | 🏠 vrbo

Jump to new Watch



Matt Landau

Ambassador

Staff member

Inner Circle



Today at 10:28 AM

New 🔊 📄 #1

Note: Thanks to @ToonTownRob for posting this [mini-revelation](#) about the power of starting your email responses with a twist. It inspired this week's Motivation!

Listing sites like Airbnb and Vrbo rank as the top pound-for-pound allocation of your time to generate inquiries. All the various listing sites make up [Stage 1 of Listing Site Independence framework](#). But also from our findings, we learned that not all listings are created equally. Like speed-dating, if you don't convey quickly what makes you different from every other listing, you've lost the goldfish-level attention span of the visitor.

Note: As [@Kim](#) likes to remind us, according to some research, the average human attention span is now eight seconds, less than that of the goldfish with nine

Below are 8 deep adjustments that are reverse engineered from the factors that lead a visitor to inquire or book: intrigue, engagement, and confidence.

1) Explain you do this for a living

The vast majority of Airbnb hosts do not view their listing as a job, which while endearing and whimsical can also sow doubt in prospective guests. So come out with a disclaimer at the beginning of your listing, revealing you run your property like a business.

2) Add provenance

The word provenance refers to the chronology of an antique or piece of art. The backstory of that object is what makes it valuable. So sprinkle provenance throughout your listing: what's the story on the property, how did you come to represent it, why is the destination special to you and your family?

3) Sprinkle property name liberally

"The billboard effect" is a phenomenon that occurs when vacation rental professionals see additional direct bookings after listing on Airbnb. But you need a unique property name (or business name) to pull this off. Insert your unique property name in the title and several times throughout the description, photo captions, and About Us section.

4) Improve & shorten origin story

How did you find yourself in this position as a host? DO NOT leave your aspirational storyline on the table. The more interesting or relatable your "pre vacation rental" About Us section, the more you'll attract inquiries who respect and admire your business. Brevity beats details in this department: you should be able to explain your "origin" story in a few sentences.

5) Get on the eco train

Environmentally-friendly vacation rentals are exponentially more appealing than their direct counterparts. Which aspects of your business (products, services, amenities) reflect your awareness of the environment? Mention them blatantly.

6) Associate with a special interest niche

Listing sites like Airbnb are like a giant supermarket and it can be overwhelming for guests to navigate to the right specialty aisle, much less find your particular product without some solid signage. Make sure to mention the exact kinds of travelers who most enjoy your property with any buzzwords necessary (yes, this is the one time we permit the use of buzzwords #blessed).

7) Deploy "underdog narrative"

Hollywood movie writers use the underdog narrative to get potential viewers to admire the character for trying, moreso than for their actual success. Do this with your listing by including a short anecdote about a challenge, failure, or humble achievement that triggers emotion -- turning what was previously a transaction into a human experience.

8) Skimmify your text (3 parts)

Remember the goldfish stat? Listing viewers have very short attention spans and the more skimmable your layout, the better. Here are three quick ways to do that.

- 8.1 Normal paragraphs feel like massive walls to someone not fully vested just yet (aka. Visitors simply do not read them) so reduce your paragraph length down to 1-2 sentences (3 max) deleting as much fluff as possible. Your paragraphs should include everything they need, nothing they don't
- 8.2 Use headers (or short summaries of content) to break up sections. Headers are best when ordered to give the hierarchy of the listing.
- 8.3 CAPITALIZE money words that pique people's interest, make them use their imagination and turn the ordinary into something worth paying money for. Use ALL CAPS sparingly.
- 8.4 Use bullets or lists to show features, benefits, or any cluster of items together one per line.

Question for Members: What other ideas have you done (consciously or by accident) to beef up your listings?

Last edited: Today at 10:58 AM

🚩 Report

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🗨️ Will Franco and SScurlock



Conrad O
Envoy

Inner Circle



Today at 10:53 AM

New 🔊 📌 #2

These are great tips in my opinion! On #3: this is a key factor in attracting the "leakage" or "off platform" bookings that Airbnb/Expedia execs like to talk about. Having your property brand be unique to you, building your own site for the brand + ranking in Google for it is key. I do see lots of listings like "The Beach House at Whateverland" which can hurt/be too generic for people to find your website and book direct.

On #8, the key points there are what we've called "Bullet Points + Narrative" format which is what we're seeing most of the customers at **Guest Hook** choose for their writing style. Guests reading your listing do love a story, but they also want the facts in a quick skimmable format that is easy to digest.

Better to have:

- Four bedrooms
- Two full bathrooms

Then a longer form sentence that reads: Our property features four bedrooms and two full bathrooms.

I help vacation rental managers @ [BuildUp Bookings](#).

🔔 Report

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🗨 Nancy, Will Franco, SScurlock and 3 others



Jed
Counselor

Inner Circle

Today at 11:12 AM

New 🔊 📌 #3

These are great suggestions for beefing up copy - and I can tell by my internal groan as I read them that I have some work to do on my copy for my listings. That said, I've not put too much emphasis on the copy because I've become convinced that the standard person will not ever read them. I think that despite that inclination, I'll put some work into them anyway because it is better to be good than lucky 😊

On the other hand, I've had some really good success with a few other ways that we make our listings stand out.

- **High quality listings photos are absolutely non-negotiable.** I have been shocked by how much better our listings with professional photos have performed right out of the gates than when we use non-professional photos. The people who do this for a living know the angles and have the equipment to pull it off. Your phone photos may be able to stand up to a high quality camera in a few specific instances, but don't think that it can do the same job as a purpose built setup. Pay the extra and get the good photos.
- **Order of photos on your gallery.** This is actually an under appreciated subtlety of listing building. Start with the best shot that you'll be using - this is the attention grabber. I like to follow the first great property photo with a beach shot or something like that to pique the imagination. Next go to the living room since that is where they will be spending the most time. Then kitchen. Then master bedroom & bathroom, then on to guest rooms. Exterior features next - pool, gardens, etc. Last comes the neighborhood / community features / & more beach photos 🏖.
- **We always use a "property name" to try and bring some individuality to the property - works better than "condo #2" or "1234 street".** This also provides continuity to those travelers who are savvy enough to search multiple listing sites for the best rate. With any luck, you'll be able to pepper your copy with bread crumbs that lead back to your independent site and they can book there.
- **Amenities are important to list**, but like my concern over copy, **they get glossed over a lot of the time.** It is a totally mandatory thing to list them in the clearest way possible (use bullets / tables / etc - not in a paragraph). Still, they are a part of the formula.
- Finally and arguably as important as anything else - **reviews.** This social proof on your listings will allow people to give themselves permission to believe that the property is as good as you've represented it to be by showing how much other people enjoyed it. By the time that guests get to reading the reviews - they are looking to be sold. Make sure that you're putting your best foot forward and earning those good reviews, and make sure that they are easy to get to.

Can't wait to hear what works for everyone else!

Last edited by a moderator: Today at 11:32 AM

GM & Co-Founder | Koloa Kai | [www.koloakai.com](#)
CEO & Co-Founder | Stay Beach Cities | [www.staybeachcities.com](#)

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🗨 Will Franco, Richard, Bruce and 1 other person



Michele T
Counselor

Inner Circle

Today at 11:43 AM

New 🔊 📌 #4

Interesting @[Matt Landau](#)

I agree for the most part, in regards to #8 "Skimmify" I'm in total agreement that your listing description needs to have headlines and bullet lists, but that doesn't mean not having well-written paragraphs under headlines - the point is to help the traveler imagine themselves at your property. Yes some will skim, but some will read so have that info available for them.

In regards to #1 not everyone who is professional in every way about the self-management of their properties does this for a living.

I'm not sure what is meant by #7 "underdog narrative"? Depending on what is meant by this? I'm not sure relaying a story of difficulties and perseverance to overcome a difficulty in regards to your VR business or your VR is appropriate or professional? I may be misunderstanding what is meant

Michele Totino
Blue Ocean Vacation Rentals
<http://www.annamariaislandhouserental.com/>

🔔 Report

👍 Like + Quote ↩ Reply

🗨 Will Franco



Michele T
Counselor

Inner Circle

Today at 11:45 AM

New 🔊 📌 #5

Jed said: 🗨

These are great suggestions for beefing up copy - and I can tell by my internal groan as I read them that I have some work to do on my copy for my listings. That said, I've not put too much emphasis on the copy because I've become convinced that the standard person will not ever read them. I think that despite that inclination, I'll put some work into them anyway because it is better to be good than lucky 😊

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[Click to expand...](#)

Agree with 100% of this - especially professional photos

Michele Totino
Blue Ocean Vacation Rentals
<http://www.annamariaislandhouserental.com/>

🔔 Report

👍 Like + Quote ↩ Reply

🗨 Will Franco and Jed



Matt Landau
Ambassador

Staff member

Inner Circle



Today at 11:45 AM

New 🔊 📌 #6

Michele T said: 🗨️

Interesting @Matt Landau

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Skip at 14:01 for explainer: <https://community.vrmb.com/threads/welcome-to-force-field-executive-summary-pdf.5466/>

🗨️ Report

👍 Like + Quote ↻ Reply

🗨️ Will Franco



PBos

Counselor

Inner Circle



Today at 11:57 AM

New 🔊 📌 #7

These are good tips. Nevertheless, now in Paris the market is, by definition, nearly all domestic and all this kind of strategy which is available in "normal time" is not very effective now where the majority of clients are looking for one thing : the price.

I am 53, living in Paris.

I develop my renting activity in Paris, quartier latin, managing a restricted numbers of properties which I own : my goal is not to make turnover, but to create wealth.

I try to bring the maximum quality to the service I provide to my customers for both ethical and profitable reasons.

Finally, I am very glad and honored to participate to this group which is wonderful opportunity of exchange.

🗨️ Report

👍 Like + Quote ↻ Reply

🗨️ Nancy and Will Franco



Barry

Counselor

Inner Circle

Today at 12:06 PM

New 🔊 📌 #8

Terrific ideas! Gets my neurons popping 😄 I'll jump in here with something we've heard many times before but with a slightly different twist. We've all heard that the ROI on using a professional photographer is HUGE. I used our local airbnb photographer on a side gig and got some pretty decent pics for about \$100. Well worth it. What we don't hear emphasized enough is that we ought to spend time *planning* and *staging* every shot in the photo shoot beforehand. We want every frame to tell a story and convey a *feeling*. I spent hours over the course of a few days doing my planning and staging, whereas the shoot itself took less than an hour. Consider it the foreplay for achieving really great results 😄 Mine don't quite achieve that high bar, but take a look at the images and videos in @Sallie's CasaMarAzul. Her images are an 11 on a scale from 1 to 10.

Quiet Oasis in the Heart of Carmel-by-the-Sea (2BR/2 BA)
<https://www.vrbo.com/890436>

Carmel's Coziest Cottage (studio w full kitchen and bath)
<https://www.vrbo.com/484362>

🗨️ Report

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🗨️ Sallie, Will Franco, Richard and 1 other person



Matt Landau
Ambassador

Staff member

Inner Circle



Today at 12:17 PM

New 🔊 📌 #9

Barry said: 🗨️

Terrific ideas! Gets my neurons popping 😄 I'll jump in here with something we've heard many times before but with a slightly different twist. We've all heard that the ROI on using a professional photographer is HUGE. I used our local airbnb photographer on a side gig and got some pretty decent pics for about \$100. Well worth it. What we don't hear emphasized enough is that we ought to spend time *planning* and *staging* every shot in the photo shoot beforehand. We want every frame to tell a story and convey a *feeling*. I spent hours over the course of a few days doing my planning and staging, whereas the shoot itself took less than an hour. Consider it the foreplay for achieving really great results 😄 Mine don't quite achieve that high bar, but take a look at the images and videos in @Sallie's CasaMarAzul. Her images are an 11 on a scale from 1 to 10.

Be sure to read @DMartinez favorite thread of all time: [Maybe the Best Photo Staging Ever](#)

🗨️ Report

👍 Like + Quote ↻ Reply

🗨️ Will Franco and Richard



StacyW

Counselor

Inner Circle

Today at 12:41 PM

New 🔊 📌 #10

I am liking #7 the underdog! I feel in my area we have had two big players come in and try to squash us little guys out and I like the idea of the under dog. We always share with our renters that we are a family run business and we treat our clients like family. Our newest marketing went out this week to try and get more home owners and we put out an ad that says family run business with all the bells and whistles that the big companies have, written much better of course, I am just paraphrasing, lol. Will dive into the rest of the list with our marketing team and see where else we might be able to adjust.

🗨️ Report

👍 Like + Quote ↻ Reply

🗨️ Will Franco



mark@boostly

Counselor

Inner Circle

Today at 12:59 PM

New 🔊 📌 #11

I was reading an updated version of the human attention span and for adverts, **it's now 3 seconds!**

I am trying to find the article, I will update when I do.

@Matt Landau

🗨️ Report

👍 Like + Quote ↻ Reply

🗨️ Will Franco and StacyW



mark@boostly
Counselor
Inner Circle

Today at 1:02 PM

New 🔔 📌 #12

No listing site is the same, which is 100% correct

It's hard to have a one shoe fits all approach when looking at all of them

For example, Airbnb you can get super creative with copy

However the USP is what I am going to add in

U-Unique
S-Selling
P-Photo

The first photo is the main one.
It's your best one

It's the thumb stopper
The scroll stopper

And also, when you set it, don't forget it.

A photo you use in the Spring will be different you use for Summer bookings

OR for those Hygge winter bookings

Thanks for the tag @Matt Landau

And just to clarify your point, my attention to spam and addiction to all things online now meant it was very hard for me to read that whole post and the comments.

I am 100% a video and audio guy

Which is madness, seeing that I'm writing my first book this year 🤪

🗑 Report

👍 Like + Quote ↩ Reply



Sallie
Envoy
Inner Circle

Yellow Jersey

57 minutes ago

New 🔔 📌 #13

The best sales letter ever written sold \$2 billion worth of subscriptions to *The Wall Street Journal* between 1975-2003.

This classic "The Tale of Two Young Men" begins with:

On a beautiful late spring afternoon, twenty-five years ago, two young men graduated from the same college. They were very much alike, these two young men. Both had been better than average students, both were personable and both – as young college graduates are – were filled with ambitious dreams for the future.

Recently, these two men returned to college for their 25th reunion.

They were still very much alike. Both were happily married. Both had three children. And both, it turned out, had gone to work for the same Midwestern manufacturing company after graduation, and were still there.

But there was a difference. One of the men was manager of a small department of that company. The other was its president.

What Made The Difference

Have you ever wondered, as I have, what makes this kind of difference in people's lives? It isn't always a native intelligence or talent or dedication. It isn't that one person wants success and the other doesn't.

The difference lies in what each person knows and how he or she makes use of that knowledge.

And that is why I am writing to you and to people like you about The Wall Street Journal. For that is the whole purpose of The Journal: To give its readers knowledge – knowledge that they can use in business...

What are the takeaways for us?

1. Know who your ideal guest is. What do they yearn for?

Remember Abraham Maslow's "Hierarchy of Needs" pyramid, with five levels ascending from physical needs to self-actualization?

Unless you're hosting disaster victims or Hospice patients, we can skip over the pyramid's two bottom levels covering the basic needs of water, food, clothing, shelter; financial security, health, and physical safety.

The third level up is "Love and Belonging"—friendship, romantic love, family, social groups, community acceptance. How does your property and hosting help fulfill one or more of these needs?

The fourth level is "Esteem," and this is where we shine as hosts. People crave to feel valued and appreciated (without pandering).

Like in the film *Avatar*, we ache to have someone demonstrate "I see you."

Your photos and captions can communicate this (people look at photos before they read body copy).

For example, our Mexican beach location and property are for adults craving rest, relaxation and reconnection, along with the sense of living in their own private resort. A photo of a woman getting a massage on the ocean-view terrace is captioned with "Pampering services come to you."

Once your guests arrive, their finding small touches and amenities can continue conveying your message "I see you." You're already doing these things: a personalized Welcome note, a dog toy if you welcome doggies, a nightlight in the bathroom, a couple of suggestions for where to eat dinner their first evening, even clearing up "What time is it here?" when guests arrive from different time zones.

Maslow's final level is "Self Actualization," when we've reached our full potential. While this is an aspiration few achieve, can we offer any experiences that could help our guests find a meaning to life that could transform them a bit? Experiences with nature, or interacting with people very different from themselves, can open this door.

2. Write like you're talking to a friend. What do you want your friend to anticipate experiencing? What do you want him to feel jazzed about? What do you want her to visualize?

Would you say to her, "Our unit is steps from the ocean" or would you say, "Wrap a sarong around your bathing suit, pad across the lawn, and in less than a minute you're scrunching sand between your toes and looking at the sparkling turquoise sea."

3. Copywriters learn to make an emotional connection before attempting to convey information. Yes, prospective guests need to know how many people you can accommodate and what's included. But that won't stand out against your competitors.

How will they feel when they live in your property? What will they experience? What emotions can you evoke?

When you're on our website's Home page or Vrbo listing, the first thing you read is:
"Imagine stepping onto the terrace with your morning coffee and gazing at the ocean for signs of whales. Blue long-tailed magpie jays swoop from tree to tree, their calls backed by the sound of waves. A warm, velvety breeze brushes your skin. One word comes to mind—*bliss*."

If this is what captures your attention, then you'll keep reading.

4. Provide substantiation for your claims. Videos, photos and captions, clips of guest reviews, references to media coverage can do this.

5. As already covered in Matt's #8, make your text readable. Short paragraphs, subheads, bullets, all caps.

6. Zig when everyone else zags. Do most of your competitors lead with nearly the same photo? Do most headlines say the same thing?

Instead of a photo of your pool (like everyone else's pool), how about a photo of a breaching whale? Instead of "Lakefront home, 4 bdms, sleeps 8" how about "Lakefront sunsets by fire pit, water toys for 8."

All of these steps make us relatable humans to potential guests instead of anonymous owners who just want to deposit the check. It also differentiates our property from all the others.

Whew. Thank you for reading this!

Sallie
Casa Mar Azul
San Pancho, Nayarit, Mexico
[CasaMarAzulSanPancho.com](#)

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